

## IX. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Assuming that community groups understand the importance of fuel reduction, what prevents the work from getting done? There are a variety of reasons.

At the Unit level, an assistant chief and fire captain are responsible for pre-fire projects. It is difficult to maintain contact and support the various FireSafe councils and other community groups. This issue has been compounded as the assistant chief's position has been left vacant since May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 and the fire captain is on a temporary assignment, being regularly assigned to a fire station. In order to complete more "on-the-ground" pre-fire projects, more personnel need to be assigned to work in the six county area. In other units, a similar level of staffing is afforded to one or two counties.

Another "personnel" issue is the availability of CDF fire crews to complete projects. The locations of conservation camps, associated travel time, and other projects create competition and makes it impractical for the use of fire crews in some areas of the Unit. In place of CDF crews, CCC crews or private contractors are used. There also appears to be an increased demand for crews during the summer months for wildfires assignments, which make them less available.

Many projects are completed that meet the intent of LNU's Fire Plan but don't involve CDF personnel. An example is roadway clearing that is done by county or State road departments. In essence, these departments are creating a similar desired condition along roadways that FireSafe and other community groups are submitting grants for. Other community groups, or even large landowners, are creating their own fuelbreaks or conducting their own control burning without involving CDF. Many of the departments or personnel completing these projects are unaware of CDF's potential involvement and/or feel that they can complete the projects without CDF's involvement. Rightfully so, many of the projects, such as roadway clearing, do not need to engage CDF pre-fire personnel in the process.



Photo 33: Example of Roadway Clearing

The practice of control burning has, for the most part, become extinct in parts of LNU. Within the boundaries of LNU are six air quality districts. Each has an established approval process for control burning. Additionally, members of the Public object to the production of smoke, either for visual disturbance or health conditions. The other “big” issue is the concern for a control burn to escape. These issues can only be overcome through better education.